

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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O R 211511Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6185
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
CNO WASHDC
CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OSLO 3503

SHAPE FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, NATO, PEPR, PINT, UR, NO
SUBJECT: SOVIET SHIP VIOLATIONS COMMAND ATTENTION

REF: (A) OSLO 3484, (B) OSLO 3392, (C) STATE 179869, (NOTAL),
(D) OSLO 3245

1. THE JULY 20 VIOLATION OF NORWEGIAN WATERS BY THE SOVIET
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CARGO SHIP IRTYSJLES AND ITS SUBSEQUENT ARREST SUCCEEDED
IN LIFTING RECENT INCURSIONS TO THE FRONT PAGES. IT IS NOW THE
TOP ITEM OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION. OSLO'S MAJOR DAILY, AFTENPOSTEN,
DEVOTED ALMOST A FULL PAGE TO A DESCRIPTION OF THE RECENT
INDIDENTS, THE GON'S REACTION AS PERSONIFIED BY FONMIN FRY-
DENLUND AND THE SLIGHTLY MORE JAUNDICED VIEW TAKEN BY SEVERAL
SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, AND TO A HISTORY OF POST-WAR SOVIET

VIOLATIONS OF NORWEGIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS. MEDIA INTEREST AND NORWEGIAN CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SOVIET ACTIONS HAVE DEFINITELY HEIGHTENED AS A RESULT OF THE STALINGRAD PARTISAN AND IRTYSJLES INCIDENTS. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ESSENTIALLY SUMMARIZE THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE JULY 21 NORWEGIAN PRESS.

2. LATEST FACTS ON THE INCIDENT. THE 2,000 TON SOVIET CARGO VESSEL IRTYSJLES WAS APPREHENDED BY THE COAST GUARD CUTTER SOERFOLD IN EARLY AM JULY 20 (SEE OSLO 3484). WHEN OBSERVED, THE VESSEL WAS ANCHORED IN NORWEGIAN WATERS BUT UPON BEING APPROACHED BY THE SOERFOLD, THE IRTYSJLES STARTED UP ITS ENGINES AND ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE. THE VESSEL WAS APPREHENDED SLIGHTLY OUTSIDE THE NORWEGIAN FOUR MILE TERRITORIAL SEA AND TAKEN INTO VARDOE WHERE THE MASTER AT FIRST MAINTAINED THAT ENGINE DAMAGE HAD CAUSED THE UNSCHEDULED HALT IN NORWEGIAN WATERS, AN EXCUSE THAT HE SUBSEQUENTLY ABANDONED WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE ENGINES SEEMED TO HAVE STARTED UP WITH NO PROBLEM WHEN THE SOERFOLD APPROACHED, AND FUNCTIONED PROPERLY ON THE TRIP INTO VARDOE. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, THE CAPTAIN DOES NOW ADMIT HIS GUILT AND HAS BEEN FINED 20,000 NORWEGIAN KRONER (APPROX \$4000). THE SOVIET SHIP WILL CONTINUE TO BE DETAINED UNTIL A GUARANTEE IS RECEIVED FROM ITS OWNERS IN LENINGRAD THAT THE FINE WILL BE PAID. VARDOE POLICE OFFICIALS SAID THEY HAVE MAINTAINED TWO GUARDS ONBOARD THE RUSSIAN VESSEL SINCE ITS APPREHENSION, BUT THAT NO INSPECTION OF THE SHIP OR ITS CARGO (STATED TO BE MACHINE

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PARTS) HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN.

3. OFFICIAL VIEWS: FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND IN A JULY 20 PRESS CONFERENCE PRESENTED A LOW-KEY DESCRIPTION OF THE FIVE RECENT INCIDENTS WHICH, IN SOMETHING OF AN UNDERSTATEMENT, HE SAID HE FEARS MIGHT REPRESENT A PATTERN. COMMENTING THAT, FOR THE TIME BEING, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT INTERESTED IN DRAMATIZING THE MATTER UNNECESSARILY, THAT IT IS STILL A POLICE MATTER, FRYDENLUND SAID THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WILL NOT BE CALLED IN AGAIN UNTIL THE REPORT ON THE LATEST VIOLATION IS AVAILABLE. NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES, FRYDENLUND EMPHASIZED, ARE NOT INTERESTED IN OVERREACTING. THIS POSITION WAS MADE QUITE CLEAR IN HIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE STRESSED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN NORWAY AND THE SOVIET UNION DESPITE THE INCIDENTS ARE BETTER TODAY THAN THEY WERE A YEAR AGO.

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CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 OSLO 3503

SHAPE FOR POLAD

4. LT. GEN. TOENNE HUITFELDT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, DEFENSE
COMMAND NORTH NORWAY AND HIS NAVAL FORCES COMMANDER REAR
ADMIRAL ROBERT HELSETH EXPRESSED STRONG DOUBTS TO THE
PRESS THAT THE FIVE RECENT INCIDENTS, OCCURRING AS THEY DID
IN THE SAME GEOGRAPHICAL AREA INVOLVING THE SAME KIND OF
COMMERCIAL SOVIET VESSEL WITHIN A THREE-WEEK PERIOD,
COULD POSSIBLY BE ACCIDENTAL. ADMIRAL HELSETH
WENT A LITTLE FURTHER THAN HIS BOSS WHEN HE SAID THAT ONE
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WOULD THINK THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE TAKEN
NOTE OF THEIR AMBASSADOR'S JULY 13 MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER FRYDENLUND CONCERNING THE VIOLATIONS. IT IS
DIFFICULT, ADMIRAL HELSETH CONTINUED, TO FIND REASONS
WHY THE SOVIET UNION SHOULD WISH TO WORSEN ITS RELATIONS

WITH NORWAY--THAT ONE MUST ASSUME THAT THE FONMIN'S REQUEST EITHER HAS NOT REACHED THE APPROPRIATE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES OR THAT THESE VESSELS ARE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING SO IMPORTANT THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS WILL TO ACCEPT WHATEVER DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS THE REPEATED VIOLATIONS MAY HAVE.

5. POST-WAR HISTORY OF SOVIET VIOLATIONS OF NORWEGIAN WATERS: ACCORDING TO AFTENPOSTEN, THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY 12 SOVIET INCIDENTS SINCE WORLD WAR II, FIVE OF THEM IN THE LAST THREE WEEKS. BEFORE THE LATEST SERIES BEGAN, THE LAST REPORTED EPISODE TOOK PLACE IN OCTOBER OF 1973 WHEN A SOVIET FRIGATE STATIONED ITSELF IN NORWEGIAN WATERS OUTSIDE THE OSLO FJORD DURING THE SHIP VISIT BY AN AMERICAN CRUISER. AT THAT TIME THE GON SENT A LETTER OF PROTEST TO THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, TWO INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE IN 1971, TWO IN 1970, ONE IN 1967, ONE IN 1959 AND ONE IN 1949. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE LATEST SERIES, THERE WAS A RATHER OBVIOUS PURPOSE BEHIND EACH OF THE SOVIET INCURSIONS--EITHER TO OBSERVE ALLIED EXERCISES OR VISITING SHIPS OR TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OF VARIOUS DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS, OR, IN ONE CASE IN APRIL 1970, AS A LEGITIMATE VICTIM OF BAD WEATHER. THE LATEST EAST FINNMARK VIOLATIONS SEEMED TO DEFY SUCH EASY EXPLANATION.

6. COMMENT: FOR WHATEVER REASONS THE SOVIETS HAVE CREATED A SITUATION WHICH CANNOT BE VIEWED AS SERVING TO IMPROVE NORWEGIAN/SOVIET RELATIONS. WHILE THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION AS REFLECTED BY FRYDENLUND AND BY CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LABOR PARTY PRESS IS ATTEMPTING TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIVE VIOLATIONS, THE GROWING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SKEPTICISM IS SURE TO INFLUENCE THE EVENTUAL GON HANDLING OF THE INCIDENTS.

7. AS SOON AS THE DUST SETTLES A BIT NEXT WEEK, WE WILL PURSUE THE SUBJECT WITH DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND REPORT THE RESULTS.
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